

Habit, then, tends to regularize our conduct by canalizing the impulses that affect it. In its results it may be compared to the directive instincts that dominate the life of insects and give their behaviour such undeviating precision. But below the channels which habit elaborates, the innate impulses seethe, fundamentally unchanged: so, indeed, we must conclude from the glimpses of human nature which we obtain when habits are shattered by strong excitement. In such moments individuals and races display the traits with which they were born, and we realize that habit, which appears to transform character, in fact merely drills it, and depends very largely for its success upon the innate strength or weakness of the impulses which it endeavours to bring under discipline. The conflict between habit and character, and the inability of habit radically to overcome the more deeply seated impulses, is strikingly illustrated by the inconsistencies which we so frequently observe between the words and the conduct of individuals. Habit may guide the current of smoothly-flowing words, whilst the less plastic activities of practical conduct remain under the control of the innate impulses that constitute character. A nervous reaction, once experienced, tends to repeat itself, irrespective of feeling. We easily contract subconscious habits. But its conscious repetition may be assisted or checked

by memories
of associated pleasure or pain : and it
is very
largely by their effect upon the
formation of
habits that these feelings may
powerfully in-
fluence our ideas and behaviour.
Thus the
dangers and hardships of war have
urged man
towards peaceful habits in opposition
to the
promptings of his combative impulses :
and since
with increasing comfort the pain of
wounds, of